

A
SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF QUEBEC,

ON SUNDAY, THE 12th SEPTEMBER, 1819,

AFTER THE

PUBLIC CALAMITY EXPERIENCED IN THE DEATH OF

HIS GRACE THE

DUKE OF RICHMOND,

GOVERNOR IN CHIEF.

BY THE REVEREND

G. J. MOUNTAIN, A. B.

BISHOP'S OFFICIAL in LOWER-CANADA, & RECTOR of QUEBEC

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(PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.)
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QUEBEC:

J. NEILSON, MOUNTAIN-STREET.

—
1819.

QUEBEC, 13th September, 1819.

SIR,

HAVING participated with the rest of your Congregation, in the feeling excited yesterday by your excellent Discourse on the subject of the late deep and heavy calamity, the death of His Grace the Governor in Chief, we trust we shall be indulged in the wish we entertain, that you would favour us with a Copy of your Sermon, that it may be delivered to the Press for publication.

You have, Sir, without the air of adulation or compliment, taught a Moral and Religious Lesson, equally interesting and instructive to all ranks of men and denominations of Christians; and we feel assured that this able Discourse will call forth in the minds of its readers, that pious and devout disposition of mind, which it is so eminently calculated to inspire.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your faithful humble Servants,

<i>Ed. Bowen,</i>	<i>J. H. Adams,</i>
<i>John Caldwell,</i>	<i>Ph. V. Cortland,</i>
<i>W. B. Coltman,</i>	<i>Wm. S. Sewell,</i>
<i>H. W. Ryland,</i>	<i>R. Dunn,</i>
<i>J. Wright, M. D.</i>	<i>Frans. Coulson,</i>
<i>J. Kerr,</i>	<i>K. Sarjeant,</i>
<i>M. Lymburner,</i>	<i>W. Green,</i>
<i>H. J. Caldwell,</i>	<i>W. Stewart,</i>
<i>Charles Hayes,</i>	<i>A. Stuart,</i>
<i>Mw. Bell,</i>	<i>T. Triggs,</i>
<i>J. Stewart,</i>	<i>J. Wardlaw,</i>
<i>M. H. Perceval,</i>	<i>J. Burroughs,</i>
<i>Archd. Campbell,</i>	<i>Wm. Smith,</i>
<i>Jam's George,</i>	<i>R. Cuthbert,</i>
<i>Lewis Foy,</i>	<i>T. T. Thomas,</i>
<i>W. D. Ryland,</i>	<i>James Coffin,</i>
<i>G. H. Ryland,</i>	<i>Thos. Stott,</i>
<i>W. Hacket, M. D.</i>	<i>J. McLauchlan,</i>
<i>Thos. Cary,</i>	<i>H. L. H. Tremain</i>
<i>Jos. Cary,</i>	

The Rev. G. J. MOUNTAIN.

QUEBEC, 15th Sept. 1819.

GENTLEMEN,

I BEG you to accept my very sincere thanks for the handsome manner in which you have signified your desire that the reflections submitted to you upon a late melancholy occasion, should be made public. It might appear like affectation, or want of respect for your wishes, were I to hesitate and object. I trust that I am not chargeable with the former; I am sure that I am not guilty of the latter. And I only hope that the effect of my poor endeavours may prove in any degree to correspond with your favourable opinion.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

G. J. MOUNTAIN.

*To the Honourable Gentlemen,
and Gentlemen,
who have requested the publication
of the Sermon preached in the
Cathedral on Sunday morning
last.*

A S E R M O N.

I. Jonah, 14. *Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.*

WE are assembled for a different purpose from that which drew us together in this place, upon a late remarkable, and most solemn, most sorrowful, occasion. But it is to be hoped that, as this house of worship, and the persons of this audience, are not divested of the insignia of mourning, so also there still hang about our hearts some of the solemn thoughts and feelings which then possessed them. It is to be hoped that many who witnessed the instructive scene, witnessed it with something more than the vacant gaze of curiosity, or even the transient feeling of melancholy interest and awe. It is to be hoped that, with a respectful regret for our Ruler who is removed from us, and a lively sympathy for those who most nearly feel his loss, there were mingled some serious
and

and deep impressions of the work of Death—the changes of the world—the emptiness of human grandeur—the uncertainty of life—the necessity of preparation : Common-place reflections, if you will ; and lessons, it must be granted, very obvious and very trite—yet such as it will never be superfluous to retrace, and to inculcate afresh. It is their congruity to the case of human nature, it is our constant liability to danger, together with a heedless levity upon the subject too commonly to be seen, which has called forth these lessons so frequently, and caused them to be so familiar in our ears ; and it is much, therefore, to be lamented, if, from their familiarity they are to lose their force. Wherever the work of Death has been conspicuous, in the subject who has suffered, or in the circumstances of the stroke, it becomes our duty to improve the occasion ; and, disregarding the fastidious criticisms of those who would charge us with formally moralizing upon events which are matters of mere *feeling*, to contemplate these events as Christians ; as serious believers in a wise and good Providence ; as persons who take their views of this world and of futurity, of passing scenes and of man's entire history and destination, from the written Revelation of God. And, if it be said that the equalizing hand of Death, (which levels the high and low, and, like the God who is to judge them, pays “ no respect to persons, ”) teaches us itself to forbear from making the gradations of rank and

and order, which belong only to this world, survive the sphere for which they were formed ; if it be objected, that by noticing the great at that concluding point of their earthly history in which they resemble all mankind, we prolong the date of their distinction, and make Religion subservient to those partial regards which it disclaims—we reply—that those who are gone from us are, indeed, little concerned in the tribute which we may choose to pay them, and have done for ever with those marks of elevation which God had assigned to them on earth : but *we* are still mingling in the same scenes ; we are still conversant with the same objects, and in contact with the same varieties of life : And we ought to have our attention led to the precarious nature of worldly things, and be taught to compare what they now are, with what they are destined to become.

It is a false philosophy which philosophizes too far, and rends off the decent veil which sage Experience has thrown over human affairs. It is a shallow wisdom, after all, and inapplicable to the state and condition of human nature, which refines upon all the usages of life, and dissects, as it were, and brings to the microscope all the component parts of the social system, till every little defect is uncovered, and every offensive appearance laid open. In the eyes of a better wisdom, the distinctions of society, though they are acknowledged

knowledge only to be transient, and subordinate
 to more sacred considerations, are allowed their
 proper weight, and their *just degree* of respect.
 "Custom to whom custom—honor to whom hon-
 or—fear to whom fear—is the lesson of holy writ.
 In a serious and religious point of view, we re-
 nounce "the vain pomp and glory of the world,"
 and we adopt, (let it be hoped with sincerity,)
 the deprecation of St. Paul, "God forbid! that I
 should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus
 Christ." But it is one thing to be devoted to the
 world—to give it the place in our affections which
 is due to God and our Saviour—the influence over
 our conduct which belongs to Religion; and it is
 another, surely, to comply reasonably with the
 received order of things, and to be content with
 the course and distribution of human affairs, thro'
 which, in our appointed station, we must travel
 to our eternal home. We are to "use this world,"
 in short, though to use "as not abusing it." It
 is idle, it is impossible, it is neither the dictate of
 wisdom nor the intention of Providence, that we
 should cut down the common concerns of life to
 just the standard of what our necessities require,
 or our philosophical abstractions might approve;

O reason not the *need*—our basest beggars
 Are, in the poorest things, superfluous,
 Allow not Nature more than Nature needs,
 Man's life is cheap as beasts—

It is idle to declaim upon the unmeaning nature
 of outward solemnities, to cry out against the
absurdity

absurdity of different customs and emblems and formalities, which, but for the associations with which they have grown up, and the habit of the mind in regarding them, would convey, perhaps, no appropriate feeling—for, while we are “in the body” we must be acted upon by such associations; must be guided, to a certain degree, by the effect which external objects produce upon our senses. The distinctions, therefore, and the usages of Society, external and transitory as they are, are not to be despised. Even in the obsequies of the dead, they may properly and wisely be observed. True, they are empty honors to the party who receives them, and it must be very needless to say that we discard the idea of their efficacy, or their influence upon the state of the departed spirit. But it is proper to shed over such occasions the drapery of Sorrow, and, especially in the case of high public characters, to give them a certain dignified solemnity of mourning. It is allowable, surely, to indulge the feelings of survivors, who console themselves by shewing respect to the memory of a friend when their affection can discharge itself in no other channel. It is useful to impress upon those who *witness* the spectacle, some feelings of seriousness and awe; some sense of an important and affecting occurrence. Upon the present occasion we have ample cause for this. I speak not of the private loss sustained by the family and friends

of the Duke of Richmond—let the marks of their attachment and the depth of their present sorrow, if it be necessary, testify to this : I speak not of his private qualities—let it be left to those who had opportunities of close and continued personal observation, to perform this task, if it be required—I experienced only, with others, the general affability of his manners ; and I knew him as a regular attendant, and as a communicant in this Church—kneeling by the spot where his insensible remains are now deposited—I might mention also that I never referred in vain to him any case of distress, and that I received from him a tender of committing to my hands the means of charity, to a much larger extent than I should have deemed myself warranted in accepting : I might mention the firmness with which he faced the close encounter of Death, and the devout resignation expressed (as we are fully informed,) in his last prayers—But it is not my business to display the character of the dead, which is a dangerous office in the pulpit ; and none of us, Heaven knows, considered as candidates for a glorified immortality, can well bear to be extolled, or stand upon our own righteousness in the eyes of Him who “chargeth his Angels with folly :” “Behold ! even to the moon, it shineth not—yea the stars are not pure in his sight : How much less man that is a worm !”—We will hope that God, who called him in so unexpected a way from hence,

has

has accepted him for the sake of Christ, our true dependence, and taken him to a better world—My business is, (so far as it shall please God to permit my being instrumental,) my business is to make the dispensation useful to the living.

And, in endeavouring to do this, I shall place it in two points of view. First, as it conveys a lesson of humility, of acquiescence, of prostration, as it were, with confession of our own impotence and littleness, before the wisdom and providence of God, who “doth whatsoever he pleaseth in Heaven and in Earth ;” who “ruleth over the armies of Heaven, and the inhabitants of the Earth ;” who “putteth down one, and setteth up another, and none may say unto him, What doest thou ?”

We have sustained a severe, and, with reference to the scale of things in this Colony, a momentous public loss. But the lessons of Disappointment are salutary. The fall of towering expectations, the baffling issue of things upon which we had built our hopes, serve to discipline our presumption, and to enforce upon us the precept of our Lord, “In patience possess ye your souls.” We are apt to be too anxious, too eager, that the course of affairs should correspond with our own ideas of what is best ; we cannot bear to see the world going wrong, and to witness the errors, (as
it

it seems to us,) of Men in Power, the blind perverseness of one party, the self-interested conduct of another, the supineness or temporizing indecision of a third. And we stand upon the watch for changes which are to rectify these wayward proceedings, to balance these jarring interests: We see a golden opportunity disclose itself to view; we take the game, as it were, into our own hands; we augur favourably from *this* circumstance, we pronounce sagaciously upon *that*. With all imaginable self-complacency, we trace out the series of effects, the train of probable results; we indulge in visions of the future which are not destined to be realized, and dispose, in expectation, of a harvest which is never to be reaped.

Thus, the benefits to be derived to us here, from having a Representative of Majesty so near the grade of Royalty itself; the weight of his influence in carrying any point to which it might be desirable to call the attention of the Government at home; the height which he occupied, placing him above the danger of being overborne by any flood of popular encroachment on the spot, or being tempted to ingratiate himself by any measure which would compromise our true prosperity; the views which he had actually embraced of the interests of these Provinces, and his real desire to draw out their latent resources, and to promote their welfare in every point—all these
concurring

concurring circumstances of advantage produced, certainly, in the minds of thinking men, a feeling that his arrival had been auspicious for us, and that his government would be pregnant with happy consequences.

Vain anticipations and fallacious hopes !—A single stroke of Providential visitation puts to rout the pleasing images which we had conjured up. The mandate of “the High and Holy One that inhabiteth Eternity” came forth and changed the scene. His breath can upset in an hour the surliest calculations of human foresight, and the whole fabric of earthly probabilities. “Thou O Lord ! hast done as it pleased thee.” We are not to interpret such expressions of Scripture as conveying the idea of a capricious exercise of Power, or a delight in mortifying the hopes of men. But we need some check to prevent us from fixing our dependence on this world, and some memento that “it is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.” We need to be reminded of our short insight into his Providence ; of our shallow penetration into the scheme of his Government ; of our utter inability to judge of the means by which he may please to work, and the steps by which he “brings good out of evil.”—That the actions of free creatures, as we are—(alas ! that we should so abuse our freedom)—that the actions of free creatures,

creatures, as well as the events which befall them, are under the government of the Divine Providence—that the consequences of these actions they seldom can calculate with correctness, and never can command—that, whether considered upon a scale commensurate with the interests of nations, or reduced to the affairs of domestic life, they produce important results of which the very shadow never occurred to us, and appear to form the links of some chain which we cannot discern—that this is because they are under the controul and distribution of some Superior Agency—that nothing, therefore, can happen to us without the Divine permission and design,—these are things which are so far from influencing our feelings, that they usually escape even our attention. It is, however, our duty to observe them, and to receive with a sense of these truths whatever may befall us. “It is the Lord—let him do what seemeth him good.” “The Lord gave—and the Lord hath taken away: Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

But there is another serious lesson most forcibly presented to us in this dispensation, which remains to be considered before we conclude. In the awful and unlooked for circumstance which swept off the Chief of this Community, do we discern no moral applicable to our own case, to the case of all mankind? do we read no warning of our own frail condition and the feeble tenure of our lives?

Let

Let us view him as among the great ones of the world ; as one whose approach has made expectation rise ; whose presence imposed attention and respect ; whose smile was wont to diffuse cheerfulness ; whose slightest intimation of his slightest wish was answered with a zealous promptitude. View him as the Head of an illustrious family—the Wearer of so many hereditary titles, and superadded honors and appointments—the Possessor of palaces, the Lord of fair domains in different kingdoms of the earth—the Proprietor of so many costly articles of luxury and display—the Arbitrator, in a manner, of so many subordinate fortunes, the Patron of so many adherents, the Master of so many attendants—having at his command so many means, and “ saying to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to his servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”

Shift then the scene. Follow him on his visit to the rude commencements of civilization which scarcely break the wildness of the woods : View him there, not indeed with a broken spirit, nor unattended by some faithful friends, but severed from his family, far away from the seat of his establishments, from the halls of his ancestors—there overtaken by disease, and there surrendering his soul to God ; there closing his connection with all that had been *his* below. O what then are the glories of this world ? What are all the pleasing prospects,

pects,

pects, the satisfactory arrangements, the well-provided comforts, the laboured luxuries and enjoyments of this life? Can they bar the door against Death?—Can they deny access to Disease and Pain?—Can they promise us that they shall not be blasted in a moment—shivered at a stroke—dissipated in a breath?—Can we be made, at last, to feel what the world really is, can we be taught to acknowledge that it is not, that it cannot be, our home, our resting-place, our final stage of being? Or do we still think it mere canting and trick to talk of the instability of life, to represent the vanity of earthly things, to warn the unwary heart against abandoning itself without reserve to their seductions? Can we be wrought into a temper to hear with seriousness of other things beyond this visible horizon—to listen to “good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people”—to learn the terms of salvation, and the covenant of Grace—to expect a voice which shall “summon the sleepers of a thousand years*,” “Arise ye dead and come to judgment”—to look to One who will screen and shelter us when that “judgment is set,” and “the books are opened,” and the Angel “lifts up his hand to Heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be Time no longer”? Let us, I conjure you, let us learn to find our comfort in these promises, to secure a happy interest in these “things which shall be hereafter.”

“Take

* This expression is from Archbishop Tillotson.

“ Take good heed to them in time, while the day of salvation lasteth : For the night cometh when no man can work.” They “ shall be,” we know not precisely when—but all ‘hings are advancing to their consummation, and, when we are individually summoned, they are completed as it respects our destiny. “ Heaven and Earth shall pass away”—the frame of nature shall be violently broken up—and with it, all the pageantry of nations, all the monuments of Fame, all that strikes us by its grandeur or is endeared to us by its attractions, shall be involved in one universal destruction—but the memorials of Piety shall survive unimpaired ; the records of the Eternal Judge shall never be defaced nor injured ; and they whose names are registered there, (while the impenitent and the despisers are consigned to the perdition which they have procured to themselves,) shall, thro’ the goodness of their Maker and the merits of their Redeemer, be installed in the everlasting possession of that “ glory and honour and immortality” which they still sought for, during their abode in the flesh, “ by patient continuance in well-doing.”